

over whether the writer or the receiver
owns the rights to such ephemera,
and over which of us
had abused the other's trust.

now i am guarded in my notes
and she saves none of them.

the veterans

we were sitting in the campus beer bar
on the last day of school

and this handsome blonde was saying
how you tend to settle for so much less

as you get a little older, how you don't
demand eternity in love, sublimity in poetry,

or that each night be as intense
as ravens perched upon a craggy monolith,

and i agreed, and sipped my beer portentously,
and offered some examples from my own

late-thirties vantage point
of lowered expectations,

and a bond was growing there
of two resilient weatherbeaten souls

(though she'd retained her fine looks,
while i'd lost mine in sixth grade),

but she had to run off to consummate
a real-estate deal,

and when she had left the bar
a friend said, "do you know how old she is?"

and i said, "no," and he said,
"twenty-three."